

House Republican Press Release

March 16, 2005
Press Office: 860-240-8700

Rep. Giegler Introduces Legislation to Address Unclaimed Ashes at Funeral Homes



Recent Danbury Incident Brought Issue to Light

State Representative Janice Giegler, R-138th, has introduced legislation that would require the state Department of Public Health (DPH) to adopt regulations concerning the disposition of unclaimed cremated remains by funeral homes. A 2004 incident at a Danbury funeral home, in which the state removed 87 sets of cremated human remains, brought to light the fact that state law does not specify how a funeral home should dispose of unclaimed ashes following cremation.

House Bill 5799, An Act Concerning Disposition Of Unclaimed Cremated Remains By Funeral Directors, has been raised by Legislature's Public Health Committee. The language in the bill was crafted in conjunction with the state Attorney General's Office, said Rep. Giegler.

Cremation procedures and the disposal of unclaimed cremated ashes vary between funeral homes.

According to published reports, the State of Connecticut closed Danbury's Tomlinson Homestead funeral home in 2002, after an investigation discovered numerous problems. The sets of unclaimed cremated remains were discovered in 2004.

"A funeral home should have the ability to dispose of unclaimed ashes without being held libel for a civil action procedure," said Rep. Giegler. "Since current statutes don't have a directive as to what should take place after a cremation, this bill would establish a clear process."

Dan Jowdy, President of the Jowdy-Kane Funeral Home in Danbury and Kane Funeral Home in Ridgefield said the legislation would give funeral homes the opportunity to legally dispose of unclaimed cremated remains.

"The lack of statute to address this has hampered every funeral home," said Jowdy, who also serves as a member of the state board of examiners for funeral directors and embalmers. "I don't believe there is a funeral home in the State of Connecticut that does not store some unclaimed remains. This legislation is long overdue."

